

CHEETAH STRIDES

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE CHEETAH CONSERVATION FUND



PATHWAYS KENYA

CHEETAH COLLARING

SEEING SPOTS

ESSAY CONTEST



Photo by Eli Walker



Cheetah
CONSERVATION FUND
www.cheetah.org

HELP US KEEP THE CHEETAH WHERE IT BELONGS

in the wild.

NOTES FROM THE DIRECTOR



The year is off to a fast start with so many things happening all the time at CCF. We are busy 24/7 daily and although there is a lot of routine, our days are always interesting and there is never a dull moment!

December and January are our summer months in Namibia and we receive a lot of interns from local higher education institutions. This year was certainly no exception, as we hosted 11 students from the University of Namibia and Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST), formerly the Polytechnic of Namibia. The interns helped with everything from research and husbandry to caring for dogs, goats and cheetahs living in our sanctuary.

In other higher education news, Matti Nghikembua, our chief ecologist and forest steward, who has been working with CCF for over 17 years, recently received a full scholarship to conduct his PhD. studies in forestry management in Finland working with our habitat restoration program. Congratulations, Matti!

In February, CCF welcomed an international news crews from CNN. Two great journalists, Colin Hancock and Nick Migwi, producer and camera operator for CNN's *Inside Africa*, shot footage at CCF then accompanied staff to Erindi Private Game Reserve to record us working with rewilded cheetahs. The story is due to air in mid-March. When we find out, we will post the information on our Facebook page, www.facebook.com/CCFCheetah. Please check often for updates.

Even though we are only two months into the new year, I have already taken three trips out of the country. In January, Dr. Louisa Richmond-Coggan and I traveled to Kenya for a conference bringing together many different people involved in conservation to share ideas, Pathways Kenya: Human Dimensions in Wildlife. While there, we met lots of new friends who were very eager to hear about our work, including members of Parliament and the new Kenyan Conservation Caucus.

In early February, I traveled to Gaborone, Botswana, to represent CCF at a regional workshop on biosphere reserves (BR). A BR is a protected area that is similar to our Namibian conservancies, but their status is internationally recognized. The main purpose of the workshop was to discuss UNESCO's "Man in the Biosphere Program" (MAB), one of their major scientific initiatives dedicated to conserving genetic resources. We are investigating how the Greater Waterberg Landscape -- the area where CCF is based -- could be designated as a BR. Be on the lookout for an upcoming blog piece I'm writing on this topic.

My third trip of 2016 was home to Santa Cruz for the passing of my father, Ralph Bushey, who was one of CCF's earliest champions. My thanks to all who sent your condolences. Knowing he was in your thoughts brought comfort during this difficult time. And, just arriving back to Namibia I was greeted by the passing of Carl Hilker, another one of our CCF early champions. Through our Chewbaaka Society, we know that several legacy gifts will come to CCF in their names.

I really hope to see you on my upcoming U.S. Spring Tour, so I can update you in person and share more CCF news. As a friend of the cheetah and a CCF supporter, I encourage you to proactively share your knowledge about what we do. Please tell your friends and acquaintances about CCF. You never know when you may make a new cheetah friend, an ally in our fight to save this beautiful creature.

Sincerely,

Dr. Laurie Marker
Founder and Executive Director

UPCOMING EVENTS:

DR. MARKER'S AUSTRALIA TOUR

Adelaide, SA
March 5th
Presentation and Book
Signing

Melbourne, VIC
March 8th
Presentation

Monarto, SA
March 6th - 8th
Two Day Conference at
Monarto Zoo

Perth, WA
March 11th
Big Cat Big Party

DR. MARKER'S USA SPRING TOUR

Staford, CA
April 1st
Lecture at Stanford U.

Providence, RI
April 13th
Presentation at Roger
Williams Zoo

Redwood City, CA
April 2nd
WCN Expo

Palm Desert, CA
April 19th
Presentation at Living Desert

Tuscon, AZ
April 7th
Dr. Marker at Reid Park Zoo

Denver, CO
April 20th
Cheetah Fundraiser

Los Angeles, CA
April 9th
Meetch Cheetah

For more info and to see the
updated schedule,
www.cheetah.org/events/

TURNING CONFLICT INTO COEXISTENCE



Pathways is an annual conference that brings together visionary wildlife managers, leaders in conservation policy, students and academics from around the world to exchange ideas and forge frontiers. This was the fifth annual and first international conference, with over 200 people from 27 different countries attending. Pathways Kenya and the Department of Human Dimensions of Natural Resources, Warner College of Natural Resources at Colorado State University co-hosted the event at the Mt. Kenya Safari Club in Nanyuki, Kenya, from Jan. 10-13.

This conference's theme, Integrating Human Dimensions into Fisheries and Wildlife, drew practitioners from throughout Africa. CCF's Ecology Manager, Dr. Louisa Richmond-Coggan, and Dr. Laurie Marker attended the conference along with Mary Wykstra from Action for Cheetahs, CCF's partner in Kenya. Dr. Marker gave a presentation about CCF's work in the Greater Waterberg Landscape that was in line with the conference theme, turning conflict into coexistence, Namibian Communal Conservancies: Why an Integrated Program Works, with contributions from Louisa Richmond-Coggan and Matti Nghikembua, CCF Senior Ecologist. At the conference CCF's conservancy work was shared with many conservationists and emerging conservancies in Kenya, where new and exciting conservation partnerships are developing.

Pathways Kenya provided an excellent opportunity for the people who have their boots on the ground to meet with the rest of the conservation community, and for partnership opportunities to develop. While in Kenya, Dr. Marker visited with Action for Cheetahs at Kenya's (ACK) Samburu field station and spent time with several members of their staff, including two of their research assistants, Noreen and Cynthia, who are in Namibia collaborating on projects in CCF's genetics lab, as well as members of the Kenya Wildlife Service.

"This conference was really amazing in terms of

the people it brought together, all in conservation, but with many different perspectives," said Dr. Laurie Marker. "We also met with members of the Kenyan Parliament and leaders from the newly founded Conservation Caucus, who are eager to be engaged in active conservation."

While in Kenya, Dr. Marker also met up with long-time CCF and ACK friend, Dr. Elena Chelysheva, who directs the Mara Meru Cheetah Project. Elena is working with the local communities to help reduce conflict with cheetahs and is also working with tour guides in the region to help keep track of where the cheetahs are. Over the past several years, Elena has developed a photographic history of cheetahs in the Mara helping to understand more about the demographics of the population in the Mara ecosystem and is constructing the same for the Meru region.

JACOMINA'S CUBS GET SATELLITE COLLARS

In early February, CCF staff with a news crew from CNN's *Inside Africa* in tow ventured to Erindi Game Reserve to place satellite collars on Shandy and Savannah, the adolescent sisters born to rewilded cheetah Jacomina. The 20-month old cats were wearing VHS collars from age 13 months, but the new satellite collars will enable CCF researchers to better track their movements.

"I am pleased to report that both the young female cheetahs are in good health," said Dr. Laurie Marker. "The collars will help us see what is going on with their social lives, as we expect they will soon separate and begin mating. Our early research has shown that cheetahs have a matriarchal-dominated society where the female cubs stay within their mother's home range."

As Dr. Marker predicted, the female cubs have separated from each other two weeks after getting



Continued on next page

*top photo left to right: Dr. Louisa Richmond-Coggan, Mary Wykstra, Sarah Omusula & Dr. Laurie Marker at Mt. Kenya
bottom photo: Jacomina's cubs Savannah and Shandy, Watch for the story about Cheetah Conservation Fund on CNN's Inside Africa sometime in mid-March.*

Continued from page 2

the satellite collars and are now about six miles apart. CCF has also collared two males that were released at Erindi, and the males' and females' range are overlapping. We hope we will learn a lot from these four cheetahs at Erindi and will keep you posted on developments.

ZINZI AND FAMILY ON THE MOVE

CCF is happy to report that Zinzi and her four cubs are beating the odds and all are doing well.

"It's hard to believe it's already been five months since they were born. I have seen them several times in the last couple months, and although very shy, they are in great condition," said Eli Walker, CCF's Research Technician, who has primary responsibility for tracking Zinzi's daily movements. "They have traveled quite far in the past couple weeks, coming from the area where they were born through CCF's farms and are now in CCF's Little Serengeti area where there is a lot of wild game."



According to her satellite-tracking collar, Zinzi has been moving her cubs to new nests every few nights and recently traveling up to 15 kilometers in one movement. The two male and two female cubs are faring well, but it must be exhausting work for Zinzi, who spends most her time on the hunt. "We are able to go to her clusters where she has hunted and can usually identify her prey," said Walker. "Her favorite is duiker."

Zinzi is an excellent example of a Cheetah Supermom in action.

CHEWBAAKA'S LEGACY: THE CHEETAH GENOME

Together with an international team of 35 scientists representing institutions based in Russia, China, United States and Namibia, among other countries, CCF researchers helped formulate a detailed analysis

of the African cheetah's (*Acinonyx jubatus*) reference genome sequence. Published Dec. 9, 2015, in *Genome Biology*, this research is a significant advancement in cheetah science. Always representing his species, CCF's longtime cheetah ambassador Chewbaaka (now deceased) provided the genetic samples on which the study was built.

The team sequenced seven cheetahs, most notably



Chewbaaka, and six wild cheetahs from Namibia and Tanzania. Their findings unraveled a host of insights about the cheetah including a series of "population bottlenecks" where cheetah numbers were so low they were forced to mate with close relatives. This inbreeding, some of which occurred as long as 100,000 years ago, resulted in physiological and reproductive impairment the species that is still evident today. Led by PhD candidate Pavel Dobrynin and St. Petersburg University's Theodosius Dobzhansky Center for Genome Bioinformatics Director Dr. Stephen O'Brien, CCF's Emeritus Board Chairman, the team of authors also included CCF's Assistant Director for Research and conservation geneticist, Dr. Anne Schmidt-Küntzel and Dr. Laurie Marker.

SEEING SPOTS



Spots is not your average Livestock Guarding Dog. First, he is from the Netherlands. He came to CCF eight years ago from a partner big cat organization called Stichting SPOTS (Save and Protect Our Treasures). Secondly, Spots loves to work and is

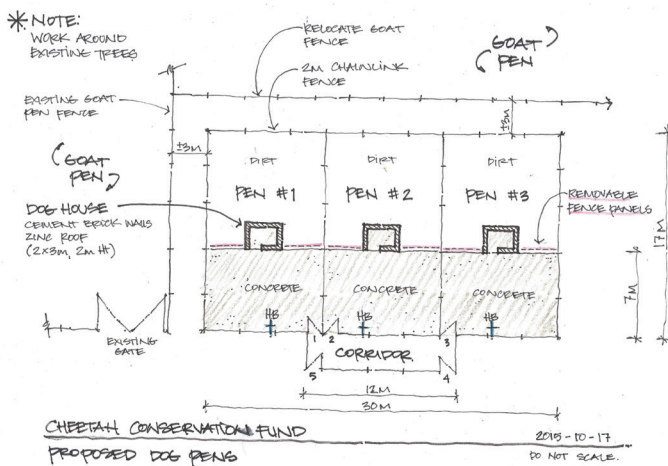
known to be something of a teacher. So when CCF received a telephone call from a farmer with problem cheetahs who was considering shooting the female cheetah and her four cubs observed around their goat yard, CCF offered to loan him Spots' services as a Livestock Guarding Dog, a non-lethal alternative.

The farmer, who is also a leader within the Namibian Agricultural Union (NAU), gladly accepted and Spots has been working at his farm for the past three months. So far, Spots has successfully discouraged predation, and no cheetahs have lost their lives. Spots will remain on the farm another month until a puppy that CCF gave the farmer in January is a bit older. Spots will help raise the puppy, imparting his excellent work ethic and guarding dog skills, then Spots will return to CCF and resume his job guarding CCF's goats and sheep.

NEW PENS FOR PUPS

CCF's success in growing our Livestock Guarding Dog program continues to be successful. Last year we bred and placed over 40 puppies and we anticipate a similar number in 2016 as well. In order to keep up with the demand for puppies, we have been increasing the number of breeding dogs at CCF, and with this, we need more pens to house them.

We have plans to build three more dog pens right away to accommodate our projected growth. If you would like to make a donation in support of this construction project, please visit www.cheetah.org and click on the Donate button at the top right of the page.



CCF's growth brings naming opportunities for sponsors of our dog pens as well as naming rights for our new Tourism buildings. If you would like to see your name at CCF in Namibia contact dan@cheetah.org for more information.

CONSTRUCTION UPDATE



CCF Lays Foundation for New Guest Accommodations

In 2015, CCF broke ground and began work on laying the foundation for five new guest accommodations that, when finished, will enable CCF to host tourists. Located across the street from the Babson House in three individual structures, each of the accommodations will share an incredible view of the Waterberg Plateau as well as close proximity to CCF's Centre.

"This has been a longtime vision of ours, to allow more people to witness conservation in action, so seeing the plans and now the foundation being laid is exciting," said Dr. Laurie Marker. "The project was launched with a grant from a CCF board member, Polly Hix and Tony Fair, which covered expenses of laying the foundation."

One of the new buildings will house an eatery upstairs with a guest suite on the ground floor, while the other two will be side-by-side duplexes, each with a pair of suites comprised of a master bedroom, living room, and private bath.

"Our goal is to complete the project before the end of 2016, so we can begin having guests in early 2017," said Dr. Bruce Brewer, CCF General Manager.

photos opposite page: left: Two of Zinzi's cubs top right: Dr. Marker, Dr O'Brien, and Dr. Anne Schmidt-Küntzel extract genetic material from ambassador cheetah Chewbaaka bottom right: Spots the Livestock Guarding Dog Photos this page: left: Planning drawing of future dog pens right: Dr. Bruce Brewer, Dan Winter - CCF's Development Director and Matt Renninger - CCF's community liason and architect with the new accommodations

To sponsor a Livestock Guarding Dog visit www.cheetah.org and view 'Sponsor a Dog' under 'Donate'. You can also choose to sponsor one of CCF's non-releaseable resident cheetahs.

BRIAN BADGER TOURS U.S.
It's Not All About Cheetahs



For one month beginning in late January, CCF Operations Manager Brian Badger hit the road on an international awareness building tour and goodwill mission taking him to more than a dozen zoos across the U.S. and the UK. The purpose of his trip was to communicate with the general public and zoo staff about CCF's programs and holistic approach to conservation. Along the way he fortified relationships with some of CCF's old friends and made many new ones.

"It's amazing how many people's eyes were opened at the zoos – the keepers, the directors, and everyone else. Sure, the Bushblok program has obvious benefits, helping the environment and helping wildlife, but there is economic value in Bushblok, in creating jobs and in helping form a whole new biomass industry," said Brian. "It's exciting to see people getting it, making the connection in their minds. Now we hope they will communicate and inform their audiences. They were surprised at first, but now they understand when I say it's not all about cheetahs."

Badger's U.S. tour landed him in chilly Washington, D.C. where he was given a warm reception by a group of CCF supporters before embarking on the first stop of his tour. Highly sought-after as a guest by the zoos, Badger's busy itinerary took him through the Midwest, then across the south and parts of Florida before winding up back in the Mid-Atlantic region where he began.

"I've lectured internationally for over 30 years at college and universities, at zoos and other events before, and I've also presented on TV and been a guest on radio, so I am very comfortable in this public speaking role. My aim is to educate people from around the world on the workings and goals of frontline conservation. It's not all doom and gloom, there are successful things going on. There is potential for the future," said Badger.

Badger was thrilled to get to peek behind the scenes at so many zoos, from the smaller community and independent zoos to the larger zoos. His favorite event was a pre-Valentine's Day program at The Maryland Zoo in Baltimore titled "Sex at the Zoo," exploring unique mating rituals in the animal kingdom. "The crowd had a few drinks by the time I spoke, so they were very receptive to my humor," added Badger.

Badger's trip afforded him a number of personal firsts. Among them his first Uber experience ("the driver, she was very nice, very personable and cheaper than a cab," remarked Badger), his first shrimp Po' Boy, in Jackson, Mississippi ("delicious") and his first \$20 hamburger ("tasted like three bucks").

"Today's modern zoos have many talented people working on their staffs, and we need zoos to play a part in our conservation strategies, to educate audiences and to bring their talented staffs to the fight," added Badger.

CCF is really excited about the new direction the zoos are taking with conservation at the forefront. We hope this will translate into more education about conservation efforts in the field and more resources for those efforts.

OPEN CALL - CCF NEEDS YOUR STUFF!

Please help our online auction by donating items to CCF. **We need: vacations, event tickets, one-of-a-kind experiences, original artworks, and handy services.** Contact info@cheetah.org to donate today!

CCF ESSAY CONTEST - Why should we save the cheetahs and what would be your plan to save them?

Please use the enclosed envelope to mail your single page essay to CCF.

All submissions will be scanned and uploaded to our website so **be sure to write neatly and include your name and basic geographic location.**

STEPS:



1. Think!

- Why should we save cheetahs?
- What's so special about them?
- How would you feel if they were gone?



2. Research!

What is CCF doing to save cheetahs? Read info on our website or in our books!

WHAT I DID THIS SUMMER

Sometimes we forget the seasons are reversed below the equator. In Namibia, December and January fall in the middle of summer and are some of the hottest months of the year. So for local college students on holiday break, signing up for an internship at CCF translated into lots of hours outdoors under the hot sun learning about the cheetah and what we do.

During December 2015 and January 2016, students from University of Namibia and Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST), which used to be the Polytechnic of Namibia, descended upon our Centre to gain practical experience. Students studying agriculture, food science, conservation biology, natural resource management and tourism worked alongside CCF staff in the field doing everything from ecology work, to helping with camera traps, to hands-on care for the dogs, goats and 33 resident orphan cheetahs living in the sanctuary.

Interns play a key role in all CCF animal care. Kate Vannelli, CCF cheetah keeper, and Paige Seitz, Livestock Guarding Dog Program Manager, assisted in managing their daily schedules.

"The cheetahs and livestock guarding dogs require food and exercise daily, so we really are grateful for the extra help," said Kate.

"All of our Namibian interns were extremely enthusiastic, and we really appreciated their positive energy and attentiveness towards all they did to help in our long-term efforts," said Paige.



ON SABBATICAL AT CCF

For most people, time off from work means it's time to relax, spend a little time with the family or take a little "me time." But for a rare few, time off from work means, well, more work.

Donna Rainboth has nearly 30 years experience teaching science in secondary schools and at the university level, as an Assistant Professor of Education at Eastern Oregon University giving instruction to budding science teachers (the same college where Dr. Marker studied as an undergraduate and became a Distinguished Fellow). Instead of taking a long and well-deserved vacation, this year Donna is taking a sabbatical at CCF, attracted to the organization because of its unique combination of science, conservation and education.

While at CCF, Donna is assisting Stephanie Bradley, CCF Education Manager, write a professional development program for Namibian natural science and agriculture teachers.

"I am so happy to have Donna here for a few months," said Stephanie. "Namibia just instated new national syllabi standards for grades 1-7 (primary) this year, and secondary standards will change next year. She and I are adapting the teacher training to meet with the new standards, as well as the CCF Teacher's Resource Guide to align with the new standards."

"I am very excited to visit the local schools, so I can gain insight to better understand the teacher professional development program," said Donna. "I am also eager to participate in the many varied programs here at CCF. The best way to learn about something is to do it."

To learn more about **Internship with CCF** visit:
www.cheetah.org/you-can-help/internship/

*photo opposite page: CCF's Operations Manager Brian Badger
 photo this page: Eve Inamutira (far left) from Windhoek, Namibia, is studying Nature Conservation at the Namibia University of Science and Technology (NUST; previously the Polytechnic). Here she observes staff record the measurements of an anesthetized cheetah.*

Three winners will be chosen at random from all participants to receive a CCF purring cheetah and cheetah sponsorship for a year. If you feel inspired you can include drawings with your essay. We like cheetah drawings a lot.

Deadline to submit your essay for inclusion on our website is April 1, 2016.



3. Write & Draw (Use Glitter - YAY!)

Get out the crayons, typewriter, pens and pencils. Tell us why you love cheetahs, why they should be saved and how you would do it. Be creative!

4.

MAIL TO CCF!

Cheetah Conservation Fund
P.O. Box 2496
Alexandria, VA 22301

Nonprofit Org
US Postage Paid
Capitol Heights, MD
Permit # 4168



COME VISIT CCF HEADQUARTERS IN NAMIBIA!

Meet our ambassador cheetahs, see our new Visitor's Centre and have a deliciously prepared meal using locally grown ingredients featuring our very own Dancing Goat Cheese.

For more information on how you can visit the cheetahs contact: ccfinfo@iway.na
Bacon and CCF Feta Quiche recipe available on CCF's Pinterest page at:

<https://www.pinterest.com/ccfcheetah/>

www.cheetah.org